



WHO Reforms

For Prelims: Global Covid Summit, Covid-19, TRIPS, WHO

For Mains: Significance of India's Participation in the Global Covid Summit

Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister addressed the **Second Global Covid Virtual Summit** of the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#), where he emphasized WHO Reforms.

- The Indian government has repeatedly raised the need to reform WHO at multilateral forums such as the [G20](#) and [BRICS](#) this year (2021-22). India's calls for WHO reforms, especially after the body's initial handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, **have been backed by countries around the world.**

What are the Reforms Suggested by India?

- **Strengthening the Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) declaration process:**
 - It is important to devise **objective criteria with clear parameters for declaring [PHEIC](#).**
 - The **emphasis must be on transparency and promptness** in the declaration process.
 - A PHEIC **implies a situation** that is:
 - Serious, sudden, unusual or unexpected;
 - Carries implications for public health beyond the affected State's national border; and
 - May require immediate international action.
- **Funding:**
 - Most of the financing for Programmatic Activities of the WHO comes from extra budgetary contributions, which though voluntary in nature, are normally earmarked. The WHO enjoys very little flexibility in the use of these funds.
 - There is a **need to ensure that [extra budgetary or voluntary contributions](#) are unearmarked to ensure that the WHO has the necessary flexibility for its usage in areas** where they are required the most.
 - There is also **a need to look at increasing the regular budget of the WHO so that most of the core activities of the WHO are financed** from it, without putting an overwhelming financial burden on developing countries.
- **Ensuring transparency of funding mechanism and accountability framework:**
 - There is **no collaborative mechanism** wherein the actual projects and activities are decided in consultation with member states, there is no review with respect to value for money and whether projects are being done as per the member states priorities or if there are abnormal delays.
 - Establishing strong and robust financial accountability frameworks will enable maintaining integrity in financial flows.
 - It is also **crucial to establish a significant amount of transparency with respect to**

data reporting and disbursement of funds for increased accountability.

- **Enhancement of the response capacities of the WHO and Member States:**
 - Implementation of the IHR 2005 has highlighted critical gaps in the basic health infrastructure of member States. This has become more evident in their dealing with COVID 19 pandemic.
 - It is important that the **programmatic activities carried out by the WHO, under its General Programme of Work**, should focus on **building and strengthening capacities in member states as required under IHR 2005**, which are found lacking or deficient on the basis of the self-reporting on IHR 2005 done by the Member States.
- **Improvement of the WHO's governance structure:**
 - Being a technical Organisation, most of the work in WHO is done in Technical Committees composed of independent experts. Moreover, considering the growing risks associated with emergence of disease outbreaks the role of the Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee (IOAC), responsible for the performance of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme (WHE), becomes extremely crucial.
 - It is important that the **member States have a greater say in the functioning of the WHO**, given that it is the States which are responsible for implementation on ground of the technical advice and recommendations coming from the WHO.
 - There is a need to **devise specific mechanisms like a Standing Committee of the Executive Board to ensure effective supervision by member States.**
- **Improvement in IHR Implementation:**
 - The Member States have a **self-reporting obligation under IHR (International Health Regulations) 2005**. However, review of IHR implementation is voluntary.
 - IHR (2005), represents a binding international legal agreement involving 196 countries across the globe, including all the Member States of the WHO.
 - Their aim is to help the international community prevent and respond to acute public health risks that have the potential to cross borders and threaten people worldwide.
 - The review of the **IHR implementation should continue to be on a voluntary basis.**
 - It is critical to **accord priority to enhance international cooperation, which should be directed at aiding** developing countries in areas which they have been identified as lacking the necessary capacity to implement the IHR.
- **Access to therapeutics, vaccines and diagnostics:**
 - It has been felt that the **TRIPS flexibilities** provided for public health, under Doha Declaration, may not be sufficient to deal with crises such as Covid-19 pandemic.
 - It is important **to ensure fair, affordable, and equitable access to all tools for combating Covid-19 pandemic** and, therefore, the need to build a framework for their allocation.
- **Creation of Global Framework for Management of Infectious Diseases & Pandemics:**
 - There is a need to create a monitoring mechanism and support to member states on International Health Regulations, preparedness of infrastructure, human resources and relevant health systems capacities such as testing and surveillance systems.
 - Enhancement of capacities of countries in preparation for and response to infectious diseases of pandemic potential, including guidance on effective public health and economic measures for health emergencies by leveraging a multidisciplinary approach which includes social science alongside health and natural sciences.
- **Role of Hosted Partnerships in pandemic management:**
 - The risks imposed on humankind, by new influenza viruses causing more disease outbreaks are very real.
 - There is an urgent need for the global community to address this issue by making bold efforts and ensuring vigilance and preparedness in our healthcare systems.
 - The primary objective should be to improve capacity for global pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response, and strengthening our ability to fight back any such pandemic in future.

